



# DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

## INFORMATION SERVICE

### FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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PHOTOGRAPHS available from Fish and Wildlife Service.

#### RARE TRUMPETER SWAN INCREASES TO 212 BIRDS IN UNITED STATES

There are now at least 212 trumpeter swans in the United States, the Fish and Wildlife Service reported today to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. The birds, largest migratory waterfowl in North America, which were once thought to be extinct, are concentrated on the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, Montana, and in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming.

An estimate conducted by personnel of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service shows that there are at least 128 trumpeters on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge and adjacent lakes and about 78 in Yellowstone Park. Numerous forest fires in Yellowstone during August prevented Park officials from making a count, but estimates were made, based on recent observations.

In all, there were 133 adults and 79 cygnets: 74 adults and 54 cygnets were seen on or near the refuge, 53 adults and 25 cygnets were estimated to be in the park; 3 adults were on the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, Oregon, and 3 on the National Elk Refuge, Wyoming. The trumpeters on the Oregon and Wyoming refuges were placed there in 1939 in an attempt to encourage the bird's spread.

Annual estimates on the Red Rock Lakes Refuge and in Yellowstone National Park in other years were as follows: In 1936, 74 adults and 41 cygnets; 1937, 81 adults and 77 cygnets; 1938, 93 adults and 55 cygnets; and 1939, 123 adults and 76 cygnets.

Trumpeter swans are also still found in Canada.

The trumpeter swan faced extinction in the United States in the early part of this century. Early destruction of the species, it was explained, resulted primarily from the heavy trading in the bird's down and breast skin. Later the population was further depleted by the advance of civilization, breeding grounds of the swans being taken over for farms and ranches.

The number of trumpeters had fallen so low by 1907 that many people seriously believed the bird was extinct. Then a small flock was discovered in the Red Rock Lakes and Yellowstone Park region. The National Park Service started active protection of the swans nesting within Yellowstone National Park, but soon realized that the birds required protection outside the park as well.

In 1935, the Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge was established. Today vegetation on the sanctuary is not cut for hay or grazed by livestock. In part, this explains the return of the trumpeter, Service officials assert. Native cover has come back rapidly, and the birds are living in a better environment than they did a few years ago.

Much remains to be learned regarding the life history of the birds, but studies in that direction are now being made.

Recent reports from Archie V. Hull, manager of the Red Rock Lakes Refuge, indicate that the trumpeter swan mates for life. Last fall, when the waters of

the lake were frozen, an adult female trumpeter unable to fly was captured and penned up with another swan already in captivity. The two birds lived together all winter in apparent harmony.

In spring, a male swan, apparently the mate of the captured female, appeared at the pen and remained there. The penned female began attacking her fellow captive and trying to get out. Since she seemed able to fly, refuge personnel released her, and she and her mate calmly glided off together.

Trumpeters protect their young, Mr. Hull learned. During the fall of 1939, he drove up to the lower shore of the lake and observed two adults swimming out into the lake. When the adults were about one-quarter mile out, two cygnets came out of the cover bordering the lake and swam towards the older birds. The parents immediately flew back to the cygnets and, beating the young back with their wings and pecking at them, the adults drove the young back into cover.